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CHRIST IS RISEN!
INDEED, HE IS RISEN!

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His Holiness Writes...

Beloved in Christ,

In our journey through the sacred season of Great Lent, the Church called us to a time of deep reflection, repentance and spiritual renewal. Lent is not merely a period of abstinence, but a transformative pilgrimage; one that leads us from the wilderness of self to the fullness of divine grace. Through prayer, fasting and acts of love, we are invited to rediscover the true essence of our faith and to prepare our hearts to receive the Risen Lord.

In this solemn season, the preparation of the Holy Mooroon on the 40th Friday of Lent stands as a profound reminder of the sanctifying presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church. This sacred sacrament, rooted in apostolic tradition, reaffirms our unity with the early Church and signifies the continuous outpouring of divine grace upon the faithful. It is through such holy mysteries that the Church remains vibrant, nourished and guided in truth.

The glorious Feast of the Resurrection reminds us that the victory of Christ over death is not only a historical event but a living reality that renews hope in our hearts. The Resurrection proclaims the triumph of light over darkness, life over death and peace over conflict. In a world often troubled by conflict and unrest, particularly in West Asia, the message of the Resurrection becomes ever more relevant. We pray that the Risen Lord may inspire hearts and minds to seek peace, reconciliation and mutual understanding. May the spirit of Easter foster harmony among nations, transforming divisions into dialogue and conflict into concord.

May the blessed Feast of the Resurrection lead each one of us into a deeper experience of Christ's love and may the joy of His Resurrection fill our lives with enduring faith and hope.

With greetings and blessings of the Feast of Resurrection

Baselios Marthoma Mathews III

Editorial

The world witnessed the outbreak of another horrible war towards the end of February this year. Israel and the USA attacked Iran and assassinated many of Iran's leaders, including Ali Khamenei, the long-serving Supreme Leader of Iran. In response, Iran launched attacks on Israel and on GCC countries hosting U.S. military bases. This led to further escalation, with the United States and Israel intensifying their strikes on Iran. When Iran subsequently closed the Strait of Hormuz, the negative impact of the war reached all corners of the world, affecting economies and supply chains worldwide.

One of the root causes of this war is concern for the security of Israel, particularly its fear that Iran will develop nuclear weapons. However, the involvement of the United States raises further questions. Once again, the imperial desires of the US are being exposed.

The unethical move to attack an independent nation with false claims, driven by the intention of regime change there, cannot be dismissed as a mere impulse of the current US president alone. From the time of the Iraq War, the US was directly manifesting its interests as an empire today.

To place a puppet government in Venezuela, the US captured its president and brought him to the US. Furthermore, we heard the declaration of the intention of the president of the US to conquer independent sovereign nations like Canada and Cuba. All these indicate the tendencies of empire building.

We have heard of the Babylonian, Assyrian, Egyptian, Mauryan, Persian, and Roman empires of ancient times, as well as modern empires such as the Ottoman, Dutch, Spanish, British, and Japanese. The Ashwamedha Yajna practiced by powerful kings and emperors in ancient India, indicated their longing for imperial dominion, as well as their desire to demonstrate power and suppress neighbouring countries. As part of this ritual, a horse was set free to roam the lands, accompanied only by a charioteer. If the horse wandered unchallenged into another kingdom, it signified the subjugation of that kingdom by the king performing the ritual. Any rival king who wished to contest the claim had to face the performing king in combat. This roaming horse symbolizes the uncontrollable greed and craze for power and dominion. Today missiles are used instead of horses to demonstrate the might of the countries.

Jesus Christ inaugurated an entirely different kind of kingdom and entrusted his followers with the mission of spreading the gospel as a new empire across the world. This dream project called 'Kingdom of God' emphasizes the power of love and humility, whereas the traditional empire is centered in love of power and arrogance and dominion.

The Kingdom of God is all-inclusive, ensuring the well-being of the people even

beyond its visible boundaries, whereas the only concern of the empire is the welfare of those within their fold at the expense of the so-called outsiders. Jesus highlighted the cross as the guiding light, whereas emperors glorify weapons and violence. In other words, one emphasizes enduring suffering while the other focuses on inflicting suffering. The kingdom of God generates peace and joy for all, whereas the empire produces suffering through various forms of violence. Submission to the wisdom of God is foundational to this vision. Mahatmas like Gandhiji, Martin Luther King Jr., and Nelson Mandela tried to imbibe the light of the kingdom of God and apply it even to solve national and international issues.

The leaders of Iran were also using violence heavily to suppress opposition within the country and in neighbouring countries like Iraq. But the unethical war initiated by the emperors of the most powerful nations has now crossed all limits. If their approach becomes a norm, regime change in nations that are not dear to these empires can be possible through the assassination of the current rulers. If this norm were to be applied within nations, all opposition leaders who could pose a threat to the current regime might be eliminated through extrajudicial killings. Unfortunately, the US and Israel were opting for this horrible path by giving up opportunities for meaningful negotiations and rejecting earlier agreements with Iran.

Instead of correcting the American president, as witnessed by the world, leaders of many churches in the US were praying for and blessing the president immediately after the outbreak of this war. This is totally against the spirit of the Church, which as the body of Christ, is meant to foster peace and justice.

A walk for peace initiated by 19 Buddhist monks in the US recently, was commendable and well appreciated by many people. The monks' walk began on 26 October 2025 from Fort Worth, Texas. Covering a distance of 3,700 km, this 108-day journey ended in Washington, D.C. on 10 February 2026. There were many meetings at different stations of this walk to communicate the message of compassion and peace. Actually, such gentle and courageous initiatives by religions, together and also separately, are extremely important to heal the wounds of individuals, communities, and nations. The vision of the Kingdom of God enlightens and compels us to initiate peace between nations through dialogue while cultivating inner peace and compassion.

During a recent press conference in Jerusalem, Benjamin Netanyahu, the prime minister of Israel, made a statement citing historian Will Durant: "History proves that, unfortunately and unhappily, Jesus Christ has no advantage over Genghis Khan." For those who follow the ideals of empire, Hitler or Genghis Khan may be inspirations. Jesus himself had such a temptation to opt for the dehumanizing vision of an empire. "...the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour; and he said to him, 'All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.'" Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him'" (Matthew 4:8-10).

Easter is the celebration of the success of the vision of the Kingdom of God over that of the empire. The path of the cross, focusing on love, truth, and justice, may appear to be defeat and loss. But in the broader perspective, the light of the Gospel and the Kingdom of God as embodied by Jesus is victorious, which is proclaimed again by Easter, the feast of feasts.

"Thy Kingdom Come". Let us continue to pray and work for the peace of the world.

Bijesh Philip Achen
Editor, Malankara Sabha English Quarterly

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST: HOPE, RESISTANCE, AND RENEWAL

Metropolitan Dr. Yuhanon Mar Diascoros

The Feast of the Resurrection stands at the very heart of the Christian faith, especially at the centre of the life and worship of the Orthodox Church. The Feast of Resurrection is not merely the joyful conclusion of Great Lent; it is the proclamation that Christ has trampled down death by death, shattered the tyranny of sin, and inaugurated a new creation. "Christ is Risen!" is not a poetic greeting—it is the foundation of our theology, worship, and mission.

From the Malankara Orthodox Syrian perspective, the Resurrection is deeply liturgical, sacramental, and transformative. It is experienced not only as a historical event, but as a living reality encountered in the Holy Qurbana, in the life of the Church, and in the daily struggles of the faithful. The Risen Lord stands in the midst of His disciples and says, "Peace be with you." That peace is not passive comfort; it is the victory of divine life over chaos, fear, and fragmentation.

1. The Resurrection: Victory Through the Cross

Orthodox theology never separates the Resurrection from the Cross. Golgotha and the Empty Tomb are one mystery. The Crucified One is the Risen One. In the Paschal hymns of our Syriac tradition, we sing of Christ descending into Sheol, breaking its gates, and liberating humanity. This is not merely individual salvation but cosmic restoration.

In a world obsessed with power, success, and domination, Christ's Resurrection reveals a different logic—the triumph of sacrificial love. Christ conquers not by violence but by self-offering. The Cross exposes the emptiness of worldly pride; the Resurrection reveals the eternal strength of humility.

Today, when communities are divided by ego, competition, and internal conflicts—even within ecclesial settings—the Resurrection calls us to reconciliation. If Christ has destroyed the walls of enmity, how can we continue to build them?

2. Feast of Resurrection Amid Contemporary Struggles

Our times are marked by profound challenges:

a) Secularism and Spiritual Indifference:

Faith is often reduced to ritual without commitment, or abandoned in pursuit of material success.

b) Migration and Identity Crisis:

Many faithful live away from their ancestral homeland, struggling to preserve liturgical heritage, language, and ecclesial unity.

c) Family Fragmentation:

Economic pressures and cultural shifts weaken the sanctity of marriage and the stability of family life.

d) Youth Disillusionment:

Young people face anxiety, digital isolation, and moral confusion in an increasingly relativistic world.

e) Social Injustice and Violence:

Wars, exploitation, and inequality continue to wound humanity.

Into this fractured world, the Church proclaims the Risen Christ. The Resurrection is God's answer to despair. It assures us that darkness never has the final word. The empty tomb is not an escape from suffering; it is God's declaration that suffering can be transformed. The wounds of Christ remain visible even after the Resurrection. This teaches us that our wounds—personal and communal—can become signs of grace when united with Him.

3. Resurrection as Renewal of Community

The first act of the Risen Lord was to gather a fearful, scattered community and restore them. Easter therefore is ecclesial. It rebuilds communion and community.

For us in the Malankara Orthodox tradition, the parish is not merely an administrative unit but a Eucharistic fellowship. The Resurrection calls us to move beyond and to replace suspicion with trust. It encourages us to seek canonical order with spiritual humility. It also exhorts us to embody unity rooted in Christ rather than personalities or preferences. True Paschal joy cannot coexist with bitterness. The lighted candle we hold on Easter night must illumine our relationships.

4. The Resurrection and the Youth

To the youth of the Church, the Resurrection of Christ proclaims meaning. In a digital age that offers constant connection yet deep loneliness, Christ's Resurrection affirms that life is not random. We are created for communion with God. The Risen Lord calls young people not to passive belief but to courageous discipleship. He transforms fear into mission. Our youth too are called

to witness—in campuses, workplaces, and online spaces—to the truth that Christ is alive. The Church must therefore accompany them, not merely instruct them; listen to them, not merely advise them; empower them, not merely organize them.

5. Resurrection as Social Responsibility

Easter faith is not confined to the sanctuary. "Christ is Risen" challenges injustice, corruption, and indifference. If death has been defeated, then systems of death—poverty, exploitation, discrimination—must also be resisted.

The Resurrection demands that we become agents of life: Defending the dignity of every human person.

Practicing charity not as occasional generosity but as a way of standing in solidarity with the suffering.

The early Church's witness was credible because it reflected the life of the Risen Lord. Our witness today must do the same.

6. Living the Paschal Mystery

Resurrection of Christ is not one day; it is a way of life. In Orthodox spirituality, every Sunday is a mini-Pascha. Every Eucharist is participation in the Risen Christ. Every act of forgiveness is a resurrection from death. To live in Christ's Resurrection means: choosing hope over despair, choosing forgiveness over revenge, choosing faithfulness over convenience and choosing unity over division. The Resurrection assures us that no grave—personal, communal, or societal—is beyond God's power to open.

Conclusion

As we celebrate this holy Feast, may we remember that the stone has been rolled away—not only from Christ's tomb but from the tombs of our fear, doubt, and hostility. The Risen Lord walks with His Church, guiding her through every trial.

In the midst of contemporary struggles, the Malankara Orthodox faithful are called to be a Paschal people—rooted in the apostolic faith, nourished by the sacraments, committed to unity, and radiant with hope. Let our greeting not be mere words but a lived reality:

Christ is Risen! Indeed, He is Risen!

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(H. G. Dr. Yuhanon Mar Diascoros is the Metropolitan of the Kottayam Diocese, Assistant Metropolitan of the Asia Pacific Diocese, and the President of the Malankara Sabha Magazine.)

Is Vengeance A Virtue?

Renaming Our Species as Homo Insipiens rather than Homo Sapiens

Fr. Dr. K. M. George

One of the most alarming things about the present US-Israel versus Iran war is that there is absolutely no authoritative moral voice in our world that can persuade the powerful war mongers to end this totally unnecessary battle. It has unveiled the utter moral and spiritual emptiness of our world in the face of terrible human suffering and threat to all life on earth.

In the second world war when Allied Powers including USA, Soviet Union, China, Britain and others fought the Axis powers, mainly the expansionist Nazi regime of Adolf Hitler, there was among other things a strong moral concern about the rise of Nazi ideology and the demonic way in which the Nazis destroyed 6 million human lives mostly of Jewish stock. The western powers learned a great moral lesson from two world wars and genuinely aspired for global peace. They inscribed at the newly formed UN headquarters in New York the celebrated biblical verse from the book of prophet Isaiah: "They shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore" (2:4).

What is happening now with the strange mixing up of aggressively confrontational and deceptively peace fostering rhetoric of the leaders is something that no human observer with even a modicum of wisdom and knowledge of history can understand. If a militarily powerful "democratic" nation's policy is simply what its supreme leader feels when he wakes up every morning, then there is no more international law and no more hope for a just and peaceful world order. This style of policy making may become trendy and a role model for other power lusty leaders. Where are the people who elected and enthroned them? The common people simply suffer without voice and without any trustworthy resort to turn to. The United Nations Organization created by peace loving leaders of the nations to rescue the world from a chaotic and death dealing situation has been rendered totally impotent. All sober voices about the moral fabric of a just world order are being ridiculed or brutally crushed by those who want to make their own country, rather themselves, great again, whatever happens to humanity at large.

Hannah Arendt, the political philosopher, introduced the phrase "banality of evil" in her 1963 book on the trial of Eichmann, the notorious Nazi criminal. She argued that very ordinary human beings could become deadly instruments of evil when they do not question the moral ground of what they blindly do in the

name of obedience to higher authority, devotion to duty and ideological insensitivity to real human agony. Something of this sort of criminal insensitivity is pervading the contemporary political culture.

In English and other languages, we have the expression 'to give one's word'. It implies that the word of a responsible human being is a firm and hopeful promise to be kept against all odds. But now it is rendered totally meaningless. When presidents and prime ministers, religious supremos and spiritual leaders unabashedly break that ancient human moral principle nothing is left in our world for people to trust and hope for an order of peace and justice. These leaders without any prick of conscience implement the massacre of innocent children, the bombing of refugee camps, hospices and hospitals and the elimination of all that human beings painfully built up in the name of civilisation.

Some of us remember participating in anti-nuclear campaigns and gatherings in the 1970s and 80s with the projected goal of achieving world peace. Our wise mentors in such events used to say that a major risk of nuclear weapons was that they could be mishandled by unscrupulous and insane political rulers with terrible consequences for humanity at a global level.

We have now begun to experience that tragedy even with our sophisticated non-nuclear weapons. We should suspect by all means that some of these decision makers who unleashed the devilish war on humanity are to a very serious degree mentally deranged. What do we then do with such power-wielding leaders who are not only unable to function and govern with sobriety and good sense, but also indulge in crazy acts of decision making that spell disaster on large chunks of humanity?

Incidentally one may remember that in the Christian canonical tradition, there are rules regarding the possible removal of patriarchs and other high-ranking clerics if they fall into a condition of insanity, or as they put it in Lain canons "Non compos mentis ", not of sound mind. In the Eastern Christian tradition when they are elected and ordained to high offices the believers have to approve it by publicly shouting Axios, he is worthy. It implies that in case those elected misbehave and misuse their office and violate the People's trust in future, the same people can shout Anaxios, he is unworthy and remove them from office. Such is the People's power.

In the present war situation and in similar circumstances the suffering people who had elected and enthroned their political leaders should be able to declare them insane and so unworthy of governing. The question is whether the present democratic system has any effective mechanism to remove them from office once they are elected with a considerable parliamentary majority.

We may also raise the question if vengeance is a virtue. Looking at the Hebrew Scriptures, we see that under certain conditions the following instruction is given by the Torah or the Law of Moses: "But if there is serious injury, you are to take life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise" (Book of Exodus 21:23–25). This is sometimes called the Law of Talion, the law of retaliatory and reciprocal justice. Some religious-cultural traditions in our contemporary world literally follow this ancient notion of justice. What many in the Western world, and following them in other places, label as terrorism, could be a phenomenon that probably assumes this law of vengeance as a foothold to restore justice. In that case, no counter terrorist initiative is likely to succeed eventually, but can simply sow the seeds of further violence and vendetta for

many generations to come.

Jesus, a Jew, corrected and radically reinterpreted his own legacy of Torah, the Law of Moses, and replaced it for a completely new order of human life and society: "You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also." (Matthew 5: 38-39).

We should be very clear that in our modern situation of advanced technology, sophisticated weaponry and digital environment, there is no winning or losing a battle in the literal sense. That belongs to an old paradigm. Now, the vengeance that is created between nations and between religions and ideologies can erupt in innumerable ways of massive violence. This century and the previous one have witnessed this fact. We call it terrorism, and governments are spending enormous money and energy to set up counter terrorist strategy and structures. But given the subtle nature of advanced cyber technology and the understanding of vengeance as retaliatory justice, no government will be able to counteract effectively calculated massive violence in unsuspecting spots in the air, land and sea at a global level.

Our vision, therefore, of a peaceful human society devoid of idealised vengeance and furious vendetta turns out to be an impossible dream. Governments may consider it a great technological advancement that some stealth planes, drones, and ballistic missiles are not piloted by human beings. But the irony is that they fall on real human beings, calculated to annihilate life, and all fruits of human civilisation so far.

Jesus radically challenged the Jewish scriptural concept of retaliatory justice, and asked us to turn the other cheek, and forgive one's enemies. Some western Christian theologians would consider it an impossible ideal of the kingdom of God. But in our times, Mahatma Gandhi a Sanatan Hindu brought it alive in actual effective practice in India's independence struggle for freedom from the British colonial power. He combined it with the ancient Indian Jain and Buddhist tradition of Ahimsa, non-violence.

It is, therefore, good to remember that violence of any kind breeds violence of all kinds, now and for ages to come. Aware of the chain reaction of violence that could be engendered by his own religion's imperative on retaliation, Jesus gave such staggering dimensions to the principle of forgiveness. It's not simply seven times but seven into seventy times and more that we need to forgive. He literally practised it on the cross while being crucified by his enemies. Only forgiveness restores the world order created by God and as gifted to us.

As a species we call ourselves Homo Sapiens, that is, wise humans. (Sapientia in Latin is wisdom, discernment and right judgment). If we do not pay heed to this principle of forgiveness and reconciliation as the decisive key to the survival of life on earth, we will end up annihilating all life on this planet. If we stubbornly insist on a deliberate policy of bringing about such a tragic eventuality, we better call our race Homo Insipiens, that is, unwise or foolish human!

Still there may be some good news for people who wish to be more sanguine. Our present species is only one of the innumerably possible Homo species existing in one of the innumerably possible universes. The Creator can wisely deal with it if it is needed to create a much wiser Homo species than our own foolish species.

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The Lenten Journey: From Healing to the Restoration of Paradise

Fr. Varghese Philip Idichandy

The holy season of Great Lent invites the faithful to enter into forty days of prayer and fasting, as observed by our Lord in the wilderness. In this sacred journey, the Church calls us to reflect on the life of our Savior and strive to follow His example. As His creation, we seek to embrace the spirit of prayer, fasting and meditation that the Lord Himself practiced in the wilderness.

During these forty days of Great Lent, the Church Fathers have thoughtfully arranged six weeks of scriptural readings for the faithful during worship. The readings begin with the miracle at Cana of Galilee and continue with the healing of the leper, the paralytic, the daughter of the Canaanite woman, the crippled woman, and the man born blind. Through these sacred accounts from the Holy Gospel, the Church reminds us of the Lord's gracious ministry of healing and His boundless compassion for humanity.

Through these six weeks of Gospel readings, the Church gradually unfolds before us the healing ministry of our Lord. The journey culminates in the remembrance of Christ's victory over the temptations of Satan during His fasting in the wilderness, marking the completion of the first forty days of Lent. From

there, the church leads the faithful into a deeper spiritual experience, meditating on the salvific journey of Christ as He proceeds toward His crucifixion and His glorious resurrection. When we prayerfully reflect upon these six weeks, we begin to see that each of these events reveals a ministry that heals the shortcomings of human life. Within the life of the Church and its worship, these encounters may be understood in a sacramental sense, for through them the faithful experience the healing grace of Christ.

The first week recalls the miracle performed by our Lord at Cana of Galilee, where He turned water into wine. The Church invites us to contemplate this event not merely as the first of Christ's public miracles, but as a profound sacramental sign. Through the fall of the first human beings, creation itself came to share in the consequences of humanity's brokenness and separation from God. Yet, in this miracle, we witness the beginning of its restoration. By transforming water into wine, Christ reveals the beginning of the renewal of creation, guiding it once again towards the life and joy of Paradise. In this miracle we see that the created order, which shared in the consequences of humanity's fall, is being restored to its fullness through the grace of God.

The following five weeks focus on illness and healing. Through the healing of the leper, the paralytic, the daughter of the Canaanite woman, the crippled woman, and the blind man, the Church presents before us the compassionate ministry of Christ. These Gospel accounts reveal the Lord who reaches out to those who are rejected, suffering, and burdened. In the Lenten season, these readings call us to reflect the same mercy and compassion in our own lives toward the poor, the sick, and those who are marginalized.

If the first week proclaims the restoration of creation, the following weeks reveal the healing of fallen humanity. Through the fall, human life became subject to weakness and suffering, and the human heart was wounded by sin. In these Gospel narratives, the Church reveals that Christ came not only to renew creation but also to restore the human person and heal the wounds of sin. When we meditate upon these scriptures in the context of worship, we begin to recognize a deeper meaning within them. The five sick individuals mentioned in the Gospel are not merely figures of the past. They also represent the many infirmities that dwell within our own lives. Though the readings speak of five different persons, they mirror the inner weaknesses, struggles, and spiritual illnesses that exist within each one of us. Through these encounters with Christ, the Church teaches us that true healing is found in drawing near to Him during this sacred Lenten journey.

The first patient is the leper, a person whom society avoided and rejected. Yet the touch of Christ restores him and brings him back into the life of the community. In the Lenten journey, this reminds us that the people we reject may reveal the hidden impurities within our own hearts. When Christ heals our inner "leprosy," we are taught to receive others with love and compassion.

The paralyzed man represents spiritual stagnation. Just like him, a person who neglects prayer, fasting, meditation, and charity, gradually loses spiritual vitality, and depends on others to bring him to Christ. Like the paralytic who cannot move, we too become indifferent and unresponsive to the path of spiritual growth and slowly lose the desire to grow in our relationship with God.

The healing of the daughter of the Canaanite woman reveals Christ's authority over the evil spirit that oppressed her, and it reminds us that Christ has power over every force that torments human life. In the same way, many destructive tendencies dwell within us and weaken our spiritual life. Jealousy, hatred,

and resentment must be overcome through the grace of God so that we may experience true spiritual renewal.

The healing of the crippled woman reveals a deeper stage of spiritual transformation. Bound by infirmity and unable to stand upright for many years, she is lifted up by the compassionate touch of Christ. This healing symbolizes the restoration of a person who, once freed from inner weaknesses, is able to rise and move toward a deeper spiritual life. Just as water was transformed into wine at Cana, this miracle reminds us that through the touch of God our lives too can be transformed and raised to a higher spiritual experience.

Finally, the healing of the blindman points to the restoration of the Paradise that humanity once lost. The same Lord who formed Adam from the dust of the earth now uses clay once again to restore sight to the blind man. Through this sign, the Church reminds us that the fallen creation is being renewed and prepared once more for the life of Paradise. Adam lost the path of obedience through disobedience, but the blind man reveals the way of obedience when he faithfully follows Christ's command to wash in the pool of Siloam. When Adam first opened his eyes, he beheld God in the beauty of creation. Likewise, when the blind man receives his sight, he seeks out and finds the One who healed him. In Eden, God came searching for Adam after the fall. Here, however, we see a human being searching for and finding God. In this way, the blind man becomes a symbol that points us towards the Second Adam.

Thus, through this sacred Lenten journey, we are finally led to the saving mystery of the Resurrection, where Christ triumphs over death and restores the Paradise that humanity had lost. Through His death upon the Cross, the gates of Paradise were opened once again. The thief who was crucified beside Him became the first to receive the promise of this restoration when the Lord declared to him: "Today you will be with Me in Paradise." These words reveal the hope of the Resurrection—the recovery of the inheritance that humanity had lost.

Just as Christ ascended into the presence of the Father, we too, as His creation, are called to enter into that divine communion. Through the suffering He willingly embraced, Christ destroyed the dominion of death and granted humanity the promise of resurrection. Thus, through His incarnation, His boundless love, His crucifixion, and His glorious resurrection, Christ restored the inheritance that humanity had lost and made us heirs of Paradise. In His Resurrection we see the renewal of creation and the restoration of humanity in the grace of God.

May this sacred season of Lent prepare our hearts to receive that grace, so that we may enter into the joy of the Resurrection and share in the life that Christ has restored for us.

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(Rev. Fr. Varghese Philip Idichandy is the Vicar of St. Gregorios Orthodox Cathedral, Hyderabad.)

Rejoice Beyond Dopamine and Triumphalism

Fr. Jeo Joseph

"Rejoice in the Lord always; again, I will say, rejoice." (Philippians 4:4)

The Feast of the Resurrection stands at the very heart of the Christian faith. After the long and prayerful journey of Great Lent, the Church proclaims with joy: "Christ is risen! Truly He is risen!" This proclamation is not merely a greeting exchanged among believers, but the foundation of our hope, our faith, and our life. The Resurrection of our Lord is not only an event that took place in history; it is a living reality that must be experienced in the life of the Church and in the life of every believer. The joy of Pascha is not simply the remembrance of a victory long ago, but the participation in that victory here and now. That is why Saint Paul exhorts the faithful with such urgency, saying, "Rejoice in the Lord always; again, I will say, rejoice."

The joy to which the Apostle calls the Church is not the same as worldly happiness. In the modern world, happiness is often understood as a feeling produced by favorable circumstances, entertainment, success, or personal achievement. Even science explains happiness in terms of chemical reactions in the brain, such as the release of dopamine and other hormones that produce temporary pleasure. These experiences may give excitement and satisfaction for a short time, but they do not give lasting peace to the soul. They stimulate the mind, but they do not transform the heart.

The joy that Saint Paul speaks about is far deeper than this. It is not something that comes and goes with situations, nor is it something that can be produced by external stimulation. It is born from communion with Christ. It remains even in suffering, even in uncertainty, and even in weakness. The early Christians rejoiced not because their lives were easy, but because they knew that Christ had

conquered death. Their joy did not depend on comfort, recognition, or celebration, but on the living presence of the Risen Lord. In simple words, dopamine may give pleasure, but only Christ gives joy. What the world calls happiness may arise from the body, but true joy is born in the soul through the grace of the Holy Spirit.

Saint John Chrysostom, in his homilies on the Epistle to the Philippians, teaches that the joy which comes from God is firm and unshaken, unlike the joy of the world which quickly passes away. Worldly pleasure depends on circumstances and disappears when those circumstances change, but the joy that comes from Christ remains even in trials. This teaching reminds us that excitement, stimulation, and outward satisfaction may occupy the mind for a moment, but only the presence of Christ can give lasting peace to the human heart.

This understanding has always been preserved in the life of the Church. Many Fathers of the Church warned the faithful not to reduce worship to mere sensory enjoyment. Saint Isaac the Syrian, in his ascetical homilies, repeatedly teaches that the sweetness of God is found in the heart and not in the senses, because the pleasure of the senses passes away, while the joy given by God remains. When worship becomes only something to hear, to see, or to feel externally, the soul may be satisfied for a moment, but it may not grow in Christ. True joy is born not in the ears or the eyes, but in the heart that turns toward God in humility, repentance, and prayer.

For this reason, many spiritual fathers in the life of the Church have cautioned against an excessive emphasis on musicality, decoration, and outward display in worship. Beauty in the Church is not wrong, nor is solemn celebration against the tradition of the Church. The liturgical life of the Church has always been rich, reverent, and full of symbolism. But the Church Fathers remind us that these things must lead the faithful to prayer and not replace prayer. When the pleasure of hearing, the attraction of decoration, or the enjoyment of performance becomes the center of attention, the heart may slowly become satisfied with what is temporary and lose the desire for what is eternal.

Spiritual writers often remind us that the enemy does not always lead people away from God through open sin. Sometimes he distracts them through harmless-looking pleasures that keep the soul at the surface level. When we become content with stimulation, we may lose the hunger for grace. When we become satisfied with excitement, we may forget repentance. When we become accustomed to outward beauty, we may neglect inner transformation. In this way, even good things can become obstacles if they take the place of the living experience of Christ.

In every generation, the Church has been guided by spiritual fathers who reminded the faithful that the goal of Christian life is not comfort, not honor, and not outward success, but union with Christ. They taught that true joy is found in faith, humility, repentance, and obedience to God. In our times, however, many faithful feel a silent struggle within. While the Church continues to grow outwardly in structures, institutions, and activities, the inner call to seek the joy of Christ is not always heard with the same strength. There are many occasions of celebration, many gatherings, many programs, but fewer voices that urge us to go deeper into spiritual life.

We remember with gratitude the words of His Grace Geevarghese Mar Ivanios of blessed memory, who rests at Mar Baselios Monastery, Njaliyakuzhy. He often reminded the faithful that when the Lord comes again, He will not ask, 'Do you have a magnificent Church, a Cathedral or a Bishop?" He will ask, "Do you have faith?"

The same truth was taught by the Fathers

of the Church from ancient times. Saint Basil the Great teaches that the true beauty of the Church is not in buildings or outward greatness, but in the faith of the believers who gather in it.

One of the striking realities of our time is the contrast between the increase of celebrations and the decrease of participation in spiritual life. In many places, the Church is more active than ever in organizing anniversaries, jubilees, centenary functions, and public gatherings. Every year brings new occasions for commemoration and celebration, often conducted with great enthusiasm and visible grandeur. There is nothing wrong in remembering history or thanking God for His blessings, but we must ask with sincerity whether these celebrations always reflect spiritual growth.

In many parishes, even while celebrations become larger, the number of faithful attending regular prayers becomes smaller. Young people drift away. Families struggle to maintain spiritual discipline. Faith becomes weaker, and trust becomes fragile. Many come for occasions, but fewer remain for the life of worship. This paradox should make us reflect deeply. There is a danger that the Church may slowly fall into a spirit of triumphalism, where outward success and visible achievements give an appearance of strength while the inner spiritual life becomes weak. Saint Ignatius of Antioch reminds the Church, "It is better to keep silence and to be, than to speak and not to be." Without inner life, even the greatest activity cannot give true joy.

When the Apostle says, "Rejoice in the Lord always," he does not speak about the joy of achievement, but the joy of salvation. He does not speak about the joy of honor, but the joy of grace. He does not speak about the joy of outward display, but the joy of the Risen Christ living within us.

Therefore, Pascha invites the Church to reflect deeply. Are we growing in faith, or only in functions? Are we becoming stronger in Christ, or only louder in celebration? Are we building living temples in the hearts of the faithful, or are we only building structures of stone?

The Resurrection of Christ is not a reminder of our success, but a call to renewal. It is not a celebration of what we have achieved, but a call to return to what we have lost. If we truly rejoice in the Lord, the Church will live, even in simplicity. If we rejoice only in ourselves, the Church may continue to celebrate, but the joy will not remain.

In the Syriac tradition, Saint Ephrem the Syrian teaches in his hymns that the joy given by the Lord is eternal, while the joy of the world quickly passes away. When the heart truly experiences the grace of the Risen Christ, the pleasures of the world appear small and temporary. Pascha invites us to leave behind the joy that passes away and to enter the joy that remains forever.

Therefore, Pascha calls the Church to return to the source of her joy. Not to abandon celebration, but to rediscover its meaning. Not to reject beauty, but to place it after holiness. Not to silence music, but to make the heart pray more than the voice sings. Not only to build churches of stone, but to build faith within the people.

If the joy of Christ lives in us, even the simplest worship will be full of light. If the joy of Christ is absent, even the greatest celebration will feel empty. And so, the voice of the Apostle still speaks to the Church today:

"Rejoice in the Lord always; again, I will say, rejoice."

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FROM WINTER'S DISTANCE TO RESURRECTION DAWN

Dn. Gregory George Ninan

The year 2026 unfolded with quiet symbolism - two viral images one of a penguin walking away from its colony, another of a monkey clutching a toy while under attack—unexpectedly mirroring the spiritual journey of humankind. The month January often feels distant and cold; while February exposes vulnerability; March and April draw us into the mystery of the Cross and the triumph of the Resurrection. Reading through the lens of Scripture, these moments become more than passing curiosities but rather they become parables. The wandering penguin reflects our separation from God whereas the clutching monkey reveals our instinctive fear and misplaced trust. The crucified and risen Christ, revealed in March and April, answers both with sacrificial love and victorious life.

January — The Wandering: Humanity's Distance from God

The image of a penguin leaving its colony and walking alone towards the horizon is a striking imagery, because penguins are creatures of community. They survive by closeness, shared warmth, and collective protection. To walk away is to step into exposure. It is to exchange shelter for uncertainty. In that silent movement toward the horizon, we glimpse something profoundly human.

The Bible begins not with isolation but with communion. In Genesis 2, humanity lives in harmony with God and creation. There was no

hiding, no shame, no fear—only fellowship. Yet Genesis 3 introduces a rupture that reverberates through history. After disobedience, Adam confesses, "I was afraid… and I hid myself" (Genesis 3:10). A distance that is produced by Sin. The first consequence of rebellion is not argument but separation; not noise but withdrawal. Humanity steps away from the warmth of divine presence into a spiritual winter.

Isaiah later names this condition with clarity: "Your iniquities have separated you from your God" (Isaiah 59:2). We are created for communion, yet we drift through pride, distraction, self-reliance, or indifference. At times the wandering is subtle—a gradual cooling of devotion. Sometimes it is deliberate—a conscious turning away from God's ways. But the aftermath is the same: distance from the Source of life. January, in its stillness and austerity, mirrors that condition. It reveals how easily we can find ourselves standing alone before a vast horizon, unsure of how far we have wandered.

Yet even in the garden, divine grace moves first. "Where are you?" God asks (Genesis 3:9). The question is not for information but invitation. Scripture consistently portrays a God who seeks the distant—calling Abraham from Ur, rescuing Israel from Egypt, restoring exiles from Babylon. The wanderer is not abandoned, the shepherd never fails to find the lost sheep. January may symbolize our distance, but it also whispers of God's relentless pursuit.

February — The Clutching: Humanity's Fear and False Security

When January reflects distance, February reflects vulnerability. In the viral scene, the monkey Punch, attacked by members of his group, clutches a toy orangutan tightly. Under threat, he holds onto what feels like comfort. It is a small but a revealing gesture: when afraid, we grasp.

Fear follows separation almost immediately in Scripture. Adam hides because he was afraid. Cain fears retaliation. Israel fears surrounding nations. The disciples fear storms, persecution, and death. Fear is not foreign to faith, rather it is woven into the human history. Yet, fear exposes attachment. What we cling onto in moments of crisis reveals what we trust most deeply.

When threatened, we reach instinctively—for reputation, relationships, possessions, control, or pride. The psalmist contrasts such misplaced confidence with true refuge: "Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God" (Psalm 20:7). The human heart clutches what is near, even when it lacks the power to save.

February represents those seasons when community wounds and expectations collapse. Scripture does not sanitize such realities. Joseph is betrayed by his brothers. David is hunted by Saul. The disciples abandon Jesus in His darkest hour. Often in this worldly living, the deepest pain comes from familiar faces. In those moments, we may hold tightly to what gives even temporary comfort. Yet Jeremiah's warning stands: "Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength" (Jeremiah 17:5). Like the toy in the monkey's arms, many of our securities soothe but cannot deliver us from ultimate threats—sin, suffering, and death.

March–April — The Sacrifice and Resurrection: God's Answer to Distance and Fear

Into humanity's wandering and fear, steps Jesus Christ. Unlike us, He does not drift from danger; He walks toward it. "He set His face toward Jerusalem" (Luke 9:51). As March unfolds, the Church follows Him along the solemn road to Calvary. In Gethsemane, isolation deepens. The disciples sleep and then scatter. Judas betrays. Peter denies. On

the Cross, Christ enters the coldest point of human estrangement: "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Matthew 27:46). Here, humanity's January reaches its darkest night.

Christ did not hide, nor did He cling to divine privilege. Philippians 2 tells us that He emptied Himself, becoming obedient unto death—even death on a cross. Where we grasp for safety, He gives Himself in love. The Cross is a bridge that removes the distance we created. "God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). Divine initiative answers human estrangement. The God we left, steps toward us; the Savior we abandoned, remains faithful.

If the story had ended at Golgotha, fear would remain justified and death would still reign. But April breaks the silence of the tomb. "He is not here, for He has risen" (Matthew 28:6). The Resurrection is the decisive answer to both wandering and fear. Death, the ultimate isolation is defeated. When the risen Christ appears to the disciples who were hiding behind locked doors, He did not condemn them, rather comforted them with peace: "Peace be with you" (John 20:19). Hereby separation is overcome, fear is quieted and communion is restored.

Paul's triumphant cry resounds through history: "O death, where is your sting?" (1 Corinthians 15:55). The Resurrection announces that exile is not final and fear is not ultimate. Revelation completes the arc: "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man" (Revelation 21:3). What was lost in Eden is restored in Christ. Winter gives way to dwelling; distance yields to embrace.

While January reveals our wandering, February exposes our fragile securities, March and April proclaim redemption. The penguin walking alone is the humanity stepping away from warmth. The monkey clutching reflects our instinct to hold what cannot ultimately save. But the crucified and risen Christ transforms the story. He crosses the distance we created. He enters the fear we feel. He defeats the death we dread.

The Gospel declares that we need not remain wanderers nor live clutching powerless comforts. In Christ, communion is restored and fear is overcome. The stone is rolled away. The winter breaks. The dawn rises.

Christ is risen. And because He is risen, distance gives way to dwelling, fear yields to peace, and life has the final word.

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Perpetua and Felicity Martyrdom, Faith, and the Spiritual Legacy for the Early Church

Fr. Thimothy (Tenny) Thomas

Among the earliest and most influential Christian martyr narratives is the account of Perpetua and Felicity, two women whose faith and courage profoundly shaped early Christian spirituality and theology. Their martyrdom in 203 CE in Carthage during the persecution under Septimius Severus stands as one of the most historically documented and theologically significant martyrdom accounts in early Christianity. Preserved in the text known as 'The Passion of Saints Perpetua and Felicity', their story not only reflects the lived experience of persecution but also reveals the deep spiritual convictions that sustained the early Church.

Historical Context

The martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicity occurred during a period of heightened persecution of Christians within the Roman Empire. In 202–203 CE, Emperor Septimius Severus reportedly issued an edict prohibiting conversions to Christianity and Judaism, which intensified the persecution of new converts.[1] In the North African Christian community centered in Carthage, several catechumens—including Perpetua, Felicity, and their companions—were arrested for professing the Christian faith.

Perpetua was a young noblewoman, approximately twenty-two years old, and a

mother of an infant child. Felicity, by contrast, was an enslaved woman who was eight months pregnant at the time of her arrest. Their shared faith transcended social divisions typical of Roman society. In the Christian community, both women were regarded as equal in dignity and spiritual witness. This aspect of their story highlights one of the radical social transformations introduced by early Christianity, wherein distinctions of class and status were superseded by shared identity in Christ. [2]

The group was imprisoned while awaiting execution in the arena as part of the public celebrations for the birthday of the emperor's son, Geta. The narrative recounts the emotional struggles Perpetua faced, particularly with her father who pleaded with her to renounce Christianity for the sake of her family and child. Yet Perpetua famously responded by comparing her identity as a Christian to the unchangeable nature of an object: "Can it be called by any other name than what it is?" [3]

Theological Significance

The Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicity holds exceptional theological importance because parts of the text appear to have been written by Perpetua herself while she was in prison. If authentic—as most scholars believe—this document constitutes one of the earliest surviving writings by a Christian woman. [4]

The text contains several visions experienced by Perpetua that reveal early Christian understandings of suffering, salvation, and spiritual warfare. In one vision she climbs a ladder guarded by weapons and encounters a dragon at its base, symbolizing the trials that precede entrance into the heavenly kingdom. Another vision depicts her deceased brother Dinocrates being healed and refreshed through her intercessory prayer. These visions demonstrate the early Christian belief in the communion of saints and the efficacy of prayer for the departed.

Martyrdom was interpreted theologically as Imitatio Christi—the imitation of Christ's suffering and victory. As Tertullian, writing around the same time, argued, "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church". [5] The deaths of Perpetua and Felicity exemplified this principle: their courage strengthened Christian communities and encouraged others to remain steadfast in faith.

Furthermore, their story illustrates the concept of spiritual equality within the Christian community. Perpetua, a free noblewoman, and Felicity, an enslaved woman, entered the arena together as sisters in Christ. Their shared martyrdom symbolized the theological conviction expressed in Paul the Apostle's teaching that "there is neither slave nor free... for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

Spiritual Themes and Symbolism

Several spiritual themes emerge from the narrative that shaped the devotional life of early Christians.

Faith Amid Suffering

The prison diary emphasizes the transformative power of faith in the midst of suffering. Initially, Perpetua describes the darkness and discomfort of the prison, yet she later writes that the prison became like a palace once the Christian community supported them with prayer and encouragement. This transformation reflects a central Christian belief: suffering endured in faith becomes a pathway to spiritual glory.

Courage and Witness

The Greek word martyria—from which the term "martyr" derives—means witness. The deaths of Perpetua and Felicity were not seen merely as tragic executions but as testimonies to the truth of the Gospel. Their willingness to face wild beasts and execution publicly affirmed their loyalty to Christ over the authority of the

Roman state.

Divine Vision and Hope

The visions recorded in the narrative provided assurance that their suffering had a divine purpose. Early Christians interpreted such visions as manifestations of God's presence among persecuted believers. The spiritual imagery—ladders, gardens, shepherds, and heavenly banquets—echoes themes found in the Book of Revelation, reinforcing the expectation of eternal victory over persecution.

Impact on the Early Church

The story of Perpetua and Felicity quickly spread throughout Christian communities across the Mediterranean world. Public readings of martyrdom accounts became common in Christian liturgy, particularly on the anniversaries of their deaths. Their narrative served several important functions in the life of the early Church.

First, it strengthened communal identity. Christians living under threat of persecution found inspiration in the steadfastness of the martyrs.

Second, it provided theological reflection on suffering. Rather than interpreting persecution as divine abandonment, the Church understood martyrdom as participation in Christ's redemptive suffering.

Third, their narrative elevated the role of women in the early Christian tradition. Perpetua's leadership among the imprisoned Christians and Felicity's courage despite her pregnancy challenged cultural assumptions about gender roles in Roman society.

The influence of their story extended into later centuries. The names of Perpetua and Felicity were included in early liturgical commemorations, including the ancient Eucharistic prayer of the Western Church. Their feast day continues to be celebrated on March 7 in many Christian traditions.

Spiritual Message

The legacy of Perpetua and Felicity continues to resonate in modern Christianity. Their story conveys enduring spiritual lessons for us today.

Faithfulness over fear. Their refusal to renounce their beliefs highlights the importance of integrity and conviction in spiritual life.

Equality in Christ. Their friendship transcended social hierarchy, demonstrating that Christian identity surpasses distinctions of class, status, and ethnicity.

Hope in suffering. Their visions and confidence in eternal life reflect a theology in which suffering does not have the final word; rather, it becomes part of the believer's journey toward divine communion.

Witness through courage. Even in a contemporary world where martyrdom may take different forms, their example encourages believers to live authentically according to their faith.

Conclusion

The martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicity remains one of the most powerful testimonies from the early centuries of Christianity. Through the historical record preserved in The Martyrdom of Saints Perpetua and Felicity, we encounter not only a narrative of persecution but also a profound theological reflection on faith, suffering, and hope.

Their story reveals how the early Church understood martyrdom as participation in Christ's victory over death. It also illustrates the transformative social vision of Christianity, where distinctions of gender, class, and status were redefined within a community bound together by faith.

More than eighteen centuries later, the witness of Perpetua and Felicity continues to inspire Christians worldwide. Their lives

remind believers that authentic faith often requires courage, perseverance, and trust in the promises of God. In this way, their legacy remains a living testimony to the enduring power of faith in the face of adversity.

Footnotes

[1] Candida Moss, *The Myth of Persecution: How Early Christians Invented a Story of Martyrdom* (New York: HarperOne, 2013), 136.

[2] Robin Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1987), 442.

[3] *The Passion of Saints Perpetua and Felicity*, trans. Thomas J. Heffernan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 5.

[4] Thomas J. Heffernan, *The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 17.

[5] Tertullian, *Apologeticus*, 50.

[6] Epistle to the Galatians 3:28.

[7] Herbert Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 106.

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Together...

Do you pray together?

Do you dine together?

Do you cry together?

Then no one can separate you..

By: Sarah, Helen, Merin, Neel,

St. Mary's Orthodox Church, Begur, Bengaluru

Sacred Bond in a Changing World: Challenges of Marriage in the Contemporary Indian Scenario

Dr. Mathew Kanamala

Marriage has traditionally been considered one of the most sacred and stable social institutions in India. It is not merely a union between two individuals but a bond that connects families, cultures, traditions, and values. For centuries, marriage in India was seen as a lifelong commitment rooted in mutual responsibility, sacrifice, and social harmony. However, in the present era of rapid social change, modernization, and globalization, the nature of marriage is undergoing significant transformations. While marriage continues to remain important in Indian society, couples today face many new challenges that were less visible in earlier generations. These challenges arise from changes in lifestyle, expectations, communication patterns, economic pressures, and shifting social values.

One of the major challenges in contemporary Indian marriages is changing expectations between partners. In earlier generations, roles within marriage were clearly defined. Traditionally, the husband was expected to be the breadwinner, and the wife was expected to manage the household and care for children. Today, these roles have changed significantly. Women are highly educated and increasingly participating in the workforce. While this is a positive development for gender equality, it also brings adjustments within marital relationships. Couples must renegotiate responsibilities related to work, household duties, and childcare.

For example, consider a situation where both partners are working professionals in a metropolitan city. The husband works long hours in an IT company, and the wife is a teacher who also has to manage school responsibilities at home.

When domestic responsibilities are not shared equally, frustration and conflict may

arise. The wife may feel overburdened, while the husband may feel pressured by work expectations. If communication between them is poor, such tensions may gradually affect the emotional bond of the marriage.

Another significant challenge is the influence of technology and social media on marital relationships. In the digital age, mobile phones, social networking platforms, and constant online communication have transformed the way people interact. While technology has helped couples stay connected, it has also created new forms of distance and misunderstanding. Excessive mobile use, emotional connections outside marriage, and unrealistic comparisons with others' lives seen on social media can lead to dissatisfaction within marriage.

For instance, a husband may spend several hours on his mobile phone after returning from work, scrolling through social media or chatting with friends. The wife may feel ignored and emotionally neglected. Over time, this lack of meaningful conversation and emotional sharing may create feelings of loneliness within the relationship, even though the couple lives in the same house.

A third major challenge is the growing stress of modern lifestyle and economic pressures. Life in contemporary India, especially in urban areas, is highly competitive. Couples often struggle with financial responsibilities such as housing loans, educational expenses for children, and maintaining a certain standard of living.

The pressure to succeed professionally can sometimes reduce the time and emotional energy available for nurturing marital relationships.

For example, a young couple living in a city may be paying a large portion of their income toward home loan instalments. Both partners may be working overtime to meet financial commitments. In such a situation, emotional closeness and quality time together may slowly decline. When stress is not managed properly, it can lead to irritability, misunderstandings, and emotional distance between partners.

Another important issue is the decline of extended family support systems. Traditionally, Indian marriages were supported by joint family structures where elders played an important role in guiding and supporting couples during difficult times. Today, many couples live in nuclear families, often away from parents and relatives due to employment opportunities in different cities. While nuclear families provide greater independence, they also reduce emotional and practical support.

Consider a situation where a young couple has a newborn baby while living far away from their parents. Without the guidance of elders or family members, the couple may experience stress, fatigue, and disagreements about parenting styles. In such circumstances, even small misunderstandings may grow into major conflicts.

Communication problems also play a crucial role in marital challenges today. Effective communication is the foundation of a healthy relationship. However, many couples struggle to openly express their feelings, expectations, and disappointments. Sometimes partners suppress their emotions to avoid conflict, but unexpressed frustrations can accumulate over time and eventually lead to serious disagreements.

For instance, a wife may feel hurt because her husband rarely appreciates her efforts in managing the home and caring for the family. Instead of expressing her feelings, she may keep silent. Over time, this silence may turn into resentment, affecting the emotional warmth in the relationship. Similarly, the husband may

feel unrecognized for the pressures he faces at work but may not communicate this openly.

Another emerging challenge in modern marriages is the increasing influence of individualism. In traditional Indian culture, marriage emphasized collective well-being and family responsibilities. Today, personal freedom, self-fulfilment, and individual aspirations are given greater importance. While personal growth is valuable, excessive focus on individual needs sometimes creates conflicts within marriage.

For example, a husband may want to pursue a career opportunity abroad, while the wife may prefer to stay in India to care for her aging parents. Both desires are valid, but when partners prioritize individual goals without mutual discussion and compromise, marital harmony may be affected.

Additionally, unrealistic expectations about marriage contribute to many relationship problems. Popular culture, films, and social media often portray marriage as a continuously romantic and conflict-free relationship. In reality, marriage involves patience, understanding, compromise, and emotional maturity. When couples expect constant happiness without challenges, they may become disappointed when faced with normal marital difficulties.

In some cases, interference from families or in-laws can also create tensions in marriages. While family involvement is often supportive, excessive interference in the couple's personal decisions may create conflicts. Balancing respect for family traditions while maintaining the independence of the couple is an important challenge in the Indian context.

Despite these challenges, marriage continues to remain a meaningful and enriching institution in Indian society. Successful marriages today require mutual respect, emotional intelligence, open communication, and shared responsibilities. Couples must consciously invest time and effort in nurturing their relationship. Listening to each other, appreciating small efforts, resolving conflicts peacefully, and maintaining emotional intimacy are essential for sustaining marital harmony.

Professional support such as marital counselling and family therapy is also gaining importance in modern society. Counselling can help couples improve communication, understand each other's perspectives, and develop healthy ways of resolving conflicts. Instead of viewing counselling as a sign of failure, it should be seen as a constructive step toward strengthening the relationship.

In conclusion, marriage in the contemporary Indian scenario is experiencing a period of transformation. Changing gender roles, technological influences, economic pressures, and evolving social values have created new challenges for couples. However, these challenges also provide opportunities for growth, understanding, and partnership. When couples approach marriage with empathy, flexibility, and commitment, they can transform difficulties into deeper bonds of companionship. Ultimately, the strength of marriage lies not in the absence of challenges but in the ability of partners to face those challenges together with love, respect, and mutual support.

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Women as Agents of Change

Dr. Susan Elias

From the very beginning, God has worked through women to shape history, transform lives, and reveal His purpose to the world. Their lives are not distant stories of the past, but enduring witnesses of faith, courage, and divine calling.

We see this in the Most Holy Theotokos (Luke 1:38), whose humble obedience opened the way for our salvation; in the Righteous Queen Esther (Esther 4:14), who rose at a decisive moment to preserve her people; and in Saint Mary Magdalene (John 20:16–18), the first witness to the glorious Resurrection.

Across generations, when the world stood uncertain and in need of direction, God raised women to bring change, quietly, courageously, and with unwavering faith. Their voices may not always have been loud, but their lives spoke with power, shaping the lives of women over the centuries.

Since the establishment of the Malankara Orthodox Church in India, this has been reflected in the lives of countless Orthodox women, mothers who keep the flame of faith burning within their homes through prayer and sacrifice, and women who serve the Church and society with humility, strength, and steadfast devotion. These devoted mothers have shaped and guided the younger generation to choose paths that reflect these very virtues. Today, we see young men and women of our Orthodox Church serving as medical professionals, paramedics, and members of the nursing community. Many others are engaged in charitable organisations, either alongside their primary work or through lives wholly devoted to service. Wherever they

are and in whatever profession they serve, these young people continue to reflect Christ in a world longing for hope - often unseen and unrecognised, yet carrying a quiet strength that heals wounded hearts, restores what is broken, and brings light into places of darkness.

And coming to our own Syrian Christian homes of the 1980s and 1990s, every family had a 'role model' Ammachi, a grandmother who, often raising four, eight, or even more children, led her household with strength, wisdom, and quiet authority, carrying responsibilities with resilience, nurturing her family, preserving faith, and holding everything together with unwavering dedication. There was no need to look far for examples of leadership; we learned what it meant to care, to endure, and to lead from the lives of our mothers and grandmothers. Their strength was not loud, yet it shaped generations, and their faith, though not always spoken of, was lived out daily.

But as we look at the present generation, we see a shift. Gen Z is growing up in a very different world, one that is fast-paced, outward-looking, and at times distant from the values that once shaped our homes and lives.

In today's setting, where many in the younger generation are increasingly choosing to delay marriage or, in some cases, to step away from marriage and family life altogether, it becomes important to pause and reflect on the long-term consequences of such trends. While these decisions are shaped by a range of personal, social, and economic factors, they also signal a deeper shift in how life, purpose, and responsibility are understood.

This reality calls for a fresh way of thinking, one that places renewed value on family, faith, and commitment as the pillars of a stable and meaningful society. Strong communities are built on strong homes, and strong homes are shaped by the values that the younger generation chooses to live by and carry forward.

Within this context, young women hold a quiet yet deeply influential role in shaping the direction of the future. Through clarity of conviction, thoughtful life choices, and a steady commitment to values rooted in faith and compassion, they can help restore balance where it is gradually diminishing. By fostering spaces marked by love, patience, and understanding, whether within families, homes, or broader circles, they contribute to rebuilding trust, stability, and hope in society. In doing so, they participate in a renewal that strengthens not only individual lives, but also the very fabric of families and communities.

In the end, the story of women as agents of change is not confined to history, it continues to be written in the quiet faith of daily life. From the Theotokos to generations of mothers, from the early witnesses of the Resurrection to the women of our own time, their lives remind us that transformation does not always begin in visible places, but in hearts rooted in God. At this crossroads of generations, the call is not to imitate the world, but to gently shape it through lives anchored in faith, sustained by love, and expressed through steadfast commitment. When women live with such clarity and purpose, families are strengthened, communities are renewed, and the light of Christ quietly shines through, bringing hope where it is needed most.

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(Dr. Susan Elias is Pro Vice Chancellor, Chandigarh University, Lucknow Campus, Uttar Pradesh. Her home parish is St. Peter's and St. Paul's Orthodox Church, Chennai)

['This Icon titled Holy Women of the New Testament' is a unique icon written recently by the hands of a much acclaimed American Iconographer Ms. Heather Mackean for the University of Portland. Ms. Mackean has included 58 women saints in this icon. Thanks to Axia Women and Mr. Joe Varghese for sharing this icon.]

Orthodox Spirituality and Ecological Responsibility: Stewards of God's Creation

Joshy Mathews

In an age increasingly defined by environmental crises, from climate change and pollution to resource depletion and species loss, humanity grapples with its fractured relationship with the natural world. For the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church, as with the entirety of the Orthodox Oikoumene, the answer is not found in new-age philosophies or secular activism alone, but in the timeless, Christ-centred truths of our faith. Orthodox spirituality offers a profound understanding of creation as good, beautiful, and integral to our salvation, calling every believer to a radical ecological responsibility-a calling we must embrace with renewed urgency in our time.

Creation as Sacrament:

The Goodness of God's Handiwork. The

very foundation of Orthodox ecology rests upon the doctrine of creation. In Genesis, we encounter a God who creates with intention, shaping the world over six days and declaring His handiwork "very good" (Genesis 1:31). This emphatic declaration stands in stark contrast to worldviews that dismiss the material realm as evil, illusory, or insignificant. Instead, Orthodoxy teaches that creation is a manifestation of divine wisdom and love, filled with purpose and sustained by God's presence.

The world, therefore, is a "cosmic sacrament." In the Orthodox theological tradition, an encounter with the divine is mediated through matter. The burning bush, the Jordan River, and the oil for anointing are material things that become vehicles of grace. In a broader sense, the entire creation serves this purpose, acting as the first and continuous revelation of God's glory and wisdom. As Psalm 19:1 proclaims, "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands." When we gaze upon the majestic mountains, the complex dance of marine life, or the vibrant flora of our native Kerala, we are, in a very real sense, gazing upon the artistry and life-giving power of God. To harm creation is not merely a utilitarian mistake; it is an act of blasphemy, a desecration of the sacred masterpiece painted by the Holy Trinity.

Our ancient mandate, established in the Garden of Eden, was to live in perfect harmony with this created order. Adam was placed in Paradise "to tend and keep it" ('avad and shamar in Hebrew, meaning "to serve" and "to guard" or "to protect") (Genesis 2:15). This was not a license for domination, but an appointment to a priestly function: humanity was tasked with cultivating, protecting, and offering creation back to God in a continuous act of thanksgiving and praise. The human being acts as the microcosm, the one being who binds the material and spiritual worlds together, offering the earth's bounty heavenward and drawing down the divine blessing earthward. Indeed, Psalm 8:6 notes God's elevation of humanity: "You made them rulers over the works of your hands; you put everything under their feet." This rulership, however, is one of responsibility, not reckless exploitation.

However, the Fall, the original sin, shattered this harmonious relationship. Human disobedience introduced disorder (corruption) not only into human hearts but into the cosmos itself. Creation became subject to futility and now "groans and labours with birth pangs" (Romans 8:22), waiting for humanity to recover its proper, priestly state. The global ecological crisis we face today is, therefore, not just a failure of technology or economics, but spiritual and moral, the direct consequence of humanity's failure to fulfil its sacred trust. This failure aligns with prophetic warnings such as Hosea 4:3: "Because of this, the land mourns, and all who live in it languish; together with the beasts of the field and the birds of the air, even the fish of the sea are perishing."

Creation in Christ: Redemption and Transfiguration

The Incarnation of Jesus Christ is the absolute cornerstone of Orthodox ecological theology, providing the ultimate answer to creation's "groaning." When God the Word took on human nature, He entered fully into the material world, taking on human flesh, a piece of creation, and thereby sanctifying all matter. Christ's unity with matter demonstrates its full capacity to become a vehicle of divine grace, destined for transformation. As John 1:14 declares, "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us." This profound truth means the material world itself is infused with divine presence.

Christ's entire ministry was an ecological affirmation. He healed with mud and spit (John

9:6), He taught using seeds and vines (Matthew 13, John 15:1), and He transformed water into wine (John 2:1-11). His Resurrection and Ascension are the guarantee that creation is not to be annihilated but renewed. Just as Christ's human body was glorified and transfigured, so too will all creation be "delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God" (Romans 8:21). Our faith assures us that the world has a glorious, cosmic destiny: not destruction, but transfiguration. This eschatological hope is echoed in Revelation 21:1, "Then I saw 'a new heaven and a new earth,' for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away."

The Liturgy as an Ecological Act

This hope is nowhere more visible than in the Holy Qurbana (Divine Liturgy), the ultimate ecological action of the Church. Here, bread (the fruit of the earth and human labour) and wine (the fruit of the vine and human sacrifice) are offered to God. Through the invocation of the Holy Spirit (Epiclesis), they are transformed into the very Body and Blood of Christ. As Jesus Himself stated, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me" (1 Corinthians 11:24).

This act is a microcosm of cosmic renewal. It demonstrates that matter, once fallen, can be sanctified, lifted, and filled with divine life. By consuming the consecrated gifts, we literally incorporate transfigured creation into our bodies, preparing ourselves, body and soul, for the Kingdom. This sacred meal teaches us that our relationship with food, water, and earth should never be casual; it must always be sacramental.

Beyond the Qurbana, specific feasts reinforce this theology:

The Blessing of Water (Theophany): On the Feast of the Epiphany (Theophany), the Church consecrates water, a fundamental element of life and a symbol of creation. The prayers invoke the Holy Spirit to sanctify the water, restoring its original purity and power, and blessing it for use in healing and blessing. This ritual powerfully recalls Matthew 3:16-17, where the Spirit descends upon Christ in the waters of the Jordan, sanctifying them and, by extension, all creation. The act signifies that the whole world is to be immersed in God's grace and transformed by the Holy Spirit.

Blessing of Fruits and Harvests:

While our Malankara tradition has regional variations, the spirit of blessing the first fruits (e.g., during harvest seasons or related to the Onam celebrations in Kerala) is strong. We acknowledge God as the true owner of the land and the source of all sustenance. These blessings are not just petitions for more yield; they are acts of offering creation back to the Creator in gratitude, recognising that everything we possess is a gift. Deuteronomy 26:10 provides an Old Testament precedent: "And now I bring the first fruits of the soil that you, O Lord, have given me."

Furthermore, the very Iconography of the Church serves an ecological role. Icons are theology in colour, demonstrating matter-wood, pigments, plaster, used to convey the reality of the resurrected Christ and the transfigured saints. The icon is proof that matter can indeed be spirit-bearing, holy, and eternal. This concept resonates with the vision of Revelation 21:23, where the New Jerusalem "does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp," suggesting a spiritualized yet real existence for matter.

A Call to Ecological Responsibility: Stewards in Our Local Communities

Orthodox spirituality demands a practical response. Ecological responsibility is not optional; it is part of the journey toward

holiness. To harm creation is to neglect our calling as stewards.

Personal Asceticism

- Fasting is central to Orthodox ecological ethics. It cultivates restraint and challenges the culture of excess.

- Consumer Awareness: Reducing consumption, especially of resource-intensive products, lowers environmental impact.

- Avoiding Waste: Christ's command to "let nothing be wasted" (John 6:12) calls for mindful use of resources.

- Simplicity: Living intentionally and gratefully honours creation as a gift from God.

Asceticism is not deprivation but liberation from destructive habits.

Parish and Community Action

The Church community must model ecological responsibility through concrete action.

Sunday School

- Education is essential for forming ecological awareness:

- Integrating creation theology into lessons

- Encouraging hands-on activities like gardening

- Promoting habits such as reducing plastic use and conserving water

Teaching children to care for creation ensures continuity of this responsibility.

Youth Engagement

Youth play a crucial role in implementing change:

- Environmental Audits: Identifying waste and inefficiencies in parish life

- Water Conservation: Promoting rainwater harvesting and sustainable practices

- Cleanliness Drives: Extending care beyond church grounds into the community

- Tree Planting: Actively restoring the natural environment

These initiatives transform faith into visible action.

The Witness of Saints

We must look to our saints, particularly our own St. Gregorios of Parumala, who lived lives of profound detachment and spiritual simplicity. Their lives remind us that true richness lies not in material accumulation, but in communion with God. (Mathew 6: 19-21)

Our call as the faithful of the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church is to restore our original vocation as priests of creation. We are called to stand in the gap between the Creator and the created, offering up the earth's bounty in the Holy Qurbana and reflecting God's loving, life-giving presence through our own disciplined, intentional, and humble stewardship. By embracing this responsibility, we participate not only in the worship of God but in the redemption and transfiguration of the world He so loves. The earth is waiting for us to awaken to our true calling. As Psalm 24:1 unequivocally states: "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it." To care for it is not merely a duty - it is an act of worship.

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(Joshy Mathews is a Strategic Communications Advisor and Trainer with over 25 years of experience. He conducts workshops on communication, leadership, and soft skills, and writes a blog reviewing Indian writing in English. He is a member of St. Joseph Orthodox Church, Bangalore.)

[Joshy Mathews' article on Orthodox Spirituality and Ecological Responsibility is offered as a theological reflection on World Environment Day, observed every year on 5 June.]

YOUR STORY IS NOT OVER- JUST STARTING

Mamman Abraham

It is the family, the circumstances in which one is born and brought up, the people with whom one interacts and the social environment, that moulds an individual. Among these, the parental role is the most important. The greatest gift parents can offer their children is the harmonious relations between both of them. In such an environment, children develop self-esteem, self-confidence and trust in others - qualities that will take them to great heights in life.

Parental influence on children can be understood by a story from China. Once, neighbours in a village in China made a serious complaint about a couple who were constantly quarrelling and making everyone's lives miserable. After hearing their complaints, the judge pronounced jail term for all the four parents since their upbringing made the couple so. Children do not learn what parents say. They follow what parents do.

To succeed in life, the first and foremost requirement is discipline followed by clear-cut values. Once values become imbedded, 99.99% of decisions that one takes in life will be right. I can give a wonderful real-life example of how parents can teach values by their actions. Mr. Johney or Johney Sir as we used to call him, was a senior colleague in the bank I worked. All through his career, he decided everything based on values only. I once asked him how he got this noble trait. He told me the story.

'Once, somewhere in the late 1950s, when he was in the second standard, he found a 2 rupee-note on the road, while going back home from school. Excited, he ran home and showed it to his father. Without a word, his father draped a towel over his bare chest and asked the boy to follow him. They walked to the Catholic church in Chalakudy. There, his father asked him whether the money had been earned by hard work or received as a gift. When the boy replied 'No,' his father gently taught him that one should not keep what is not earned through one's labour or not rightfully gifted to him. Johney Sir later said that this moment transformed his life completely, shaping his decisions around values ever since.'

To face problems in life and solve them, one should start thinking creatively. Our brains are covered with cobwebs. For creative thinking, one must remove the cobwebs and start thinking differently, different from what others think. He or she becomes unique and will prove his or her Unique Selling Proposition [USP]. Then one will be able to solve any problem that comes his or her way. They will find many solutions to each challenge. A joyful confidence will arise: 'Let the problems come—I will face them and solve them.'

Two great assets a young person can have are 'time' and 'good health'. Everybody has only 24 hours in a day. It is how you prioritise and manage your time that will take you to greater heights. 90 % of what one usually does in a day will not have any relevance to their personal growth. A young boy who is 25

years old would have covered one third of his life. Within the next ten years, he should try to reach his goal and reach the zenith of glory. He is not destined to die at the age of 20 or get buried at the age of 80 with his dreams still intact. Dreams have to be realised by planning and executing it within a definite period of time using one's brain. The human brain has the capacity of more than 10 super computers.

There is nothing wrong in making a mistake. One should not repeat it but should learn from it. Without making mistakes, nothing right has been achieved. One did not start walking or say hello to everyone on the same day one came out of one's mother's womb. You fell down so many times. You stood up every time you had fallen down without giving up. Now you walk so smoothly. It is not how many times you fall that matters, but how many times you get up when you fall. Learning to say 'NO' when it has to be said will save lot of time, money and energy.

To grow in geometrical proportion or exponentially, be in the company of seniors and people who have succeeded in life. You will come out from the shackles of peer group pressure, and grow and march forward. Learn to make right decisions which are right for you. If it goes wrong later, make new decisions. Your best friend should always be 'YOU'. You do not have to compete with anyone else but 'YOU' and bring out the best in 'YOU'. Your future is in your hands. Your appearance matters a lot. Always dress up well with what you have. It costs little to be neat and you become more confident. How you look on the outside affects how you feel in the inside. Soldiers think and feel as soldiers when in uniform. Do not allow tradition to paralyse your mind. Be receptive to new ideas if you want change. Change is indispensable for success. Stagnant water in a pond will soon start stinking.

Grab any opportunity that comes in front of you. An opportunity lost is lost for ever. It will never ever come back. It will move away like a snake slithering away. Even the great Messi, if he loses an easy chance to score a goal, he will not get that chance again. So ensure that you grab any opportunity which will make you grow.

Become a very good listener. Listeners are in short supply. A judge will not punish a murder accused just on seeing him. He will have to patiently listen to all and give the verdict.

Those who read well are going to become the leaders of tomorrow. Reading will increase one's imagination and knowledge sky high. Then you will be able to contribute well in this world where AI is taking control of everything so fast. Update your knowledge and be ahead of time. By the time one leaves college, whatever one learnt would have become outmoded. A latest gadget bought by you at 10am would have become outmoded by the time you reach home at 6pm. Such is the geometric progression of technological growth. Invest in education which will result in knowledge. Knowledge is a great asset. You may lose all assets in life. But none can steal your knowledge. It will always be with you and you can start from scratch even. Effective communication will contribute to 85% for you to climb up the organisation's ladder.

One should know that the word 'attitude' is the most important word in the English dictionary. As the saying goes, your attitude determines your altitude in life. Your happiness is your creation. You can be unhappy with one lakh rupees and also happy with one rupee. It all depends on your attitude. Sleep well to give the body enough time to repair itself. To live healthy is for you to decide. Desist or stop all addictions including drugs, drinks, excessive use of internet or just being glued to the mobile or television! Addiction will result in you losing your precious time, wealth and health including mental equilibrium. You will have to spend all your savings for health just to live like a

skeleton even.

To succeed in life, never ever put off till tomorrow what you can do today. And who knows whether tomorrow will be there for you and me? Defeat is only a state of mind. And nothing more. Live as if today is your last day. Stop blaming luck. A problem becomes unsolvable only when you think so. Follow the principle of 'the next mile'. Step by step is the only intelligent way to attain any objective.

Learn and implement the art of real appreciation even for small acts of kindness. In the midst of worldly success, there should really be a human tinge in all our actions. One should be able to give the same respect one gives to the President of India and to the man in the street too. Give and earn respect and love.

From day one, have short term and long-term goals and work for it. Also be a good team player. One cannot live alone like Robinson Crusoe. You need at least a Man Friday. The best in you is yet to come. Only people who can see the invisible can do the impossible. Be one of them.

Always be inquisitive. Share knowledge. If you want to grow in geometrical proportion, find your defects from others and correct it if you think it is to be corrected.

Make your family the best. No tear drop should fall from your parents' eyes on account of you. Express your love towards your parents and obey them for a long and happy life – as the Bible says.

Always bank on hope to march forward. It is a great sin to destroy the hopes of others by our deeds and what comes from our tongue. What really matters is the size of your heart and the strength of your character. Do not commit the sin of spoiling the happiness of others. Give others support, encouragement, appreciation and hope. Surround yourself with people whose eyes will light up when they see you coming.

Always focus on your purpose. If you want to make good friendships and grow- talk 20%, hear and listen 80%. Always remember that it is easier to go from failure to success than from excuses to success. Remove unwanted fear. 99% of what we fear will not materialise. Just face it and do what you fear. Start doing anything you fear and it will be conquered.

Be the owner of three most beautiful qualities- a heart full of love, ears ready to listen and hands willing to help others. No one has written your destiny for you. You alone will make your destiny. You should not let your failures define you. You have to let your failures teach you.

Before you leave the world, realise that true fulfilment comes from giving back and not retiring to the graveyard rich. When you reach life's departure lounge, I want you to feel joyous about your ability to care and share for others as a daily routine. We all know that we came empty handed. Try doing your bit without expectation and who knows you may be creating the most satisfying memories of your life. Fill your life with exceptionally excellent, enterprising, healthy, positive, ethical and sincerely loving people. Soon you will exemplify these lofty virtues.

Let me conclude by quoting William Penn "I expect to pass through life but once. If, therefore, there is any kindness I can show, any good thing I can do to any fellow being, let me do it now and not defer or neglect it as I shall not pass this way again".

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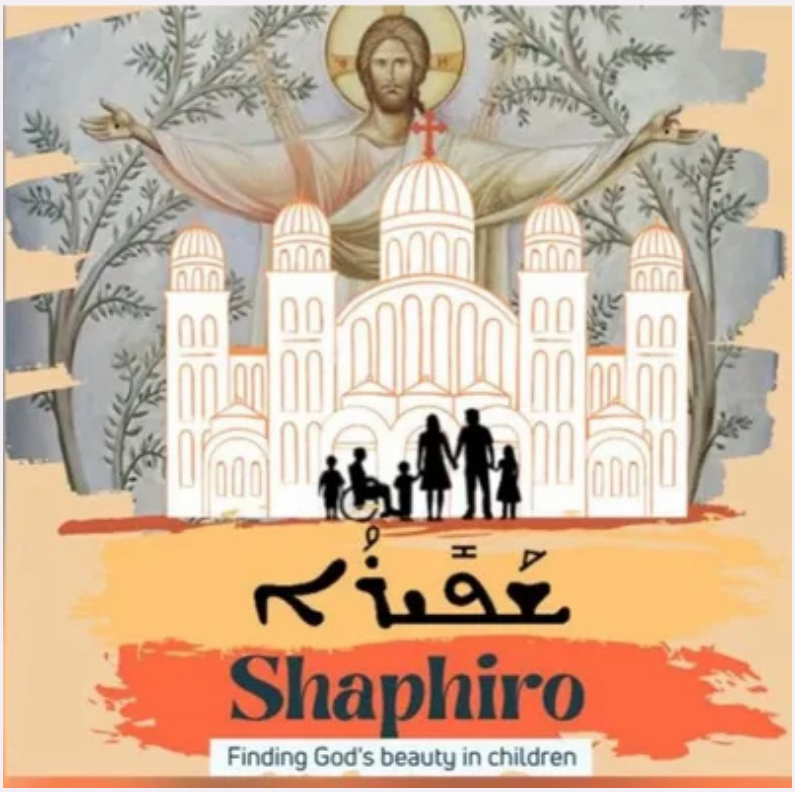
(Mr. Mamman Abraham is a member of St. Mary's Cathedral, Ernakulam, and a former Senior Manager at Federal Bank. A Kerala University first rank holder for both Degree and Postgraduate studies, he has conducted over 400 workshops on motivation, counselling, and soft skills in India and abroad. He currently serves as a director of seven limited companies and is also engaged in the pharmaceutical industry.)



Shaphiro – Reaching out to Orthodox members with special needs children

Thomas Simon

As the world was recovering from COVID-19, a few like-minded & passionate Church members from Dubai, Delhi, Mumbai, Saudi Arabia, and Australia came together in mid-2021, under the guidance of H.G. Dr. Yuhanon Mar Diascoros Metropolitan to start an online fellowship for Orthodox families who have children with special needs. Diascoros Thirumeni christened this fellowship 'Shaphiro,' a Syriac word meaning 'Beauty'—reflecting the vision of finding God's beauty in children.

Since its inception in August 2021, Shaphiro has been quietly working towards creating a more inclusive Church. Over the past three and a half years, the fellowship has connected with more than 125 Orthodox families having children with special needs from the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Germany, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Australia, and cities across India, including Delhi, Mumbai, Pune, Bangalore, Chennai, and beyond.

Shaphiro has organized monthly online fellowships, bringing families from around the globe together in faith and community. In a short span, the fellowship has initiated several programs, such as the 'Shaphiro Mom's Group' and the 'Shaphiro Clergy Group'.

In collaboration with the Coptic Church (US) and Orthodox Global Online Sunday School (OSSAE), an exclusive Sunday School syllabus for special needs children was launched by our Most Beloved Bava Thirumeni on 7th April 2024. Additionally, H.G. Yuhanon Mar Diascoros Metropolitan presented a paper titled Creating an Inclusive Malankara Orthodox Church before the Holy Synod in August 2022.

Over the years, Shaphiro has expanded from an online platform to parishes around the world:

• **Diocese-Level Shaphiro Units -** Under the esteemed leadership and guidance of Metropolitans Geevarghese Mar Coorilos, Dr. Abraham Mar Stephanos, and Geevarghese Mar Philoxenos, diocese-level Shaphiro units have been established in the Bombay Diocese, the UK-Europe-Africa Diocese, the Bangalore Diocese, and the Madras Diocese.

• **Dubai Cathedral:** For the past three years, Holy Qurbana has been celebrated monthly for families with special needs. Cottage fellowships and house visits by vicars have also been organized by the Dubai Shaphiro unit.

• **Bahrain Cathedral:** Holy Qurbana has been conducted for over a year, with Shaphiro children actively participating in the Church Harvest Festival and OVBS.

• **Brahmavar Diocese (India), Sacramento, California (US), and Kottayam Diocese (India):** Exclusive Holy Qurbana services have been held for Shaphiro members.

The Body of Christ is incomplete without our dear special angels of the Lord. Together, as the Church, we can accomplish much more. A compassionate response to children with disabilities, and their families, will go a long way in truly embracing Christ and seeing His beauty in them.

If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together -

We invite members of MGOCSM, OCYM, Sunday School, Marth Mariam Vanitha Samajam, and other spiritual organizations to join the Shaphiro initiative. If you would like your parish to become a welcoming space for children with disabilities and their families, please write to shaphiro2021@gmail.com or text "Interested" to Thomas Simon at +971-505290464.

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(Mr. Thomas Simon, Dubai, is the Shaphiro Fellowship Coordinator.)

"The dim light of the early morning or dawn is a pointer to the approaching day. Dawn is both the end of the night and the beginning of a day. Likewise, Jesus' life and especially His crucifixion and resurrection are the dawn of guarantee of the end times or beginning of the shifting to the other world which will have no end. Teachings and life of Jesus as a whole give us a vision of the bright eighth day which is beyond the normal seven days of the week. The end of history has been inaugurated in Christ. His miracles overcoming all negativities including death are marks of this glorious inauguration and the beginning of the new era. The ultimate guarantee is the resurrection of Jesus trampling down death by death. If the disciples were just cooking up a story about the Risen Lord, they would have mentioned men as the first witnesses of the Risen Lord because in those days the witness of women had no value. The fact that women were able to see the Lord after his resurrection is proof that the gospel accounts about the Risen Lord are records of the actual facts. According to the Pauline teaching more than five hundred people were able to see the Risen Lord (I Corinthians 15:6). So the claim of the followers of Jesus about His bodily resurrection cannot be ruled out as a hallucination experience or dream of one or two individuals. When the disciples started spreading the good news of Jesus' resurrection, the easiest thing to suppress that movement was to find out the dead body of Jesus and to display it publicly. The Jewish and Roman authorities who took the initiative for crucifying Jesus missed that opportunity to recover his body because Jesus truly rose from death. By seeing the risen Lord, the disciples became bold enough to offer their very life for the cause of Jesus."

From the book *Redemptive Remembrance*, p.181

NEWS

Consecration of the Holy Myron

The Devalokam Catholicate Aramana Chapel witnessed a unique and rare historical religious ceremony on 27th March, 2026 -- the 40th Friday of the Great Lent. It was the consecration of Holy Myron (Chrism/Mooron). This sacred oil symbolizing the seal of the Holy Spirit and the "aroma of Christ", is used in the Orthodox Syrian tradition for sacraments like Baptism as also for the blessing of new churches. His Holiness Baselios Marthoma Mathews III, Catholicos of the East, was the chief celebrant in this historic ritual. His Holiness was assisted by several Metropolitans of the Malankara Orthodox church. Visiting dignitaries from sister churches abroad also attended the ceremony and participated in the chanting of prayers and songs.

As the Aramana Chapel could not accommodate the thousands of believers who attended the ceremony, special LED screens were fixed at the temporary pandal for uninterrupted viewing of the consecration. Fr. Dr. Thomas Varghese Amayil, Priest Trustee of the Church served as Archdeacon (Arkkadiyakkon) while Malankara Malpan Very Rev. Dr. Johns Abraham Konat, Reesh Cor Episcopa, periodically enlightened the faithful with explanatory comments. Fr. Dr. Jacob Kurian, former Principal of the Orthodox Theological Seminary, delivered a relevant and insightful sermon tracing the history of the Consecration of the Holy Myron and explaining its theological significance.

This was the eleventh Holy Chrism Consecration taking place in India and the ninth by a Catholicos of Indian origin. The preparatory arrangements began several days in advance, with all high priests, priests and deacons assigned with special duties observing special prayers and strict fasting throughout the forty days of preparation. The consecration ceremony was followed by canonical prayers and Holy Qurbana. At the conclusion of the ceremony, the congregation was permitted to kiss the vessel containing the Holy Myron and receive blessings.

This major ecclesial event, marked by solemn preparation, symbolizing the unity and continuity of the Church drew crowds from far and near. Printed prayer books supplied to all enabled the faithful to join in the songs and responsive prayers.

Malankara Church Budget: Rs 1125 crore budget for Malankara Church

A Rs. 1125.76 crore budget for the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church for the year 2026-27, focusing on the elderly and youth, was presented by the Association Secretary, Advocate Biju Oommen, at the Managing Committee meeting of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Christian Association held at the Old Seminary, Kottayam. The meeting was presided over by His Holiness Baselios

Marthoma Mathews III, Catholicos of the East and Malankara Metropolitan.

Speaking at the meeting, His Holiness referred to the war in West Asia which is making the whole world sad. He said that everyone should pray for peace, and that the safety of Indian citizens should be ensured. He added that he had written a letter to the Prime Minister in this regard. The Church Managing Committee passed a resolution affirming the Church's solidarity with the victims and those who are living under the threat of war.

Highlights of the Budget:

With a view to keep the youth and student community connected to the church, provisions have been made in the budget for building a Chapel and Counselling Centre near Infopark. An amount of Rs.10 lakh has been earmarked for providing Scientific and Integrated training to the workers of Chare, the Church's Elderly Care project. A sum of Rs.1.50 crore has been allocated for a Camp Centre to be built on 13 acres of land at Kundara Mathilakam and Rs. 50 lakh for a Wellness Park to be built at Karapuzha. An allocation of Rs.75 lakh for the restoration of the historic 'Nalukettu' in the Old Seminary and a special grant of Rs. 2 crore for Baselius College, have also been included.

Welcome to the Special guests from the Eritrean Orthodox Church

Most Respected Abune Lucas, Abune Merkorevos, Abune Zavros and Protocol Officer for Foreign Relations Rev. Bereket Kidane visited Parumala Seminary.

Fr. Eldhose Elias, Manager, Parumala seminary, Fr. Dr.M. P. George Cor Episcopo, former Director, Shruti School of Music; Fr. Dr. John Thomas Karingattil, Principal of Kottayam Orthodox Seminary; Parumala Seminary Asst. Managers, Fr. J. Mathukutty and Fr. Geevarghese Mathew welcomed the special guests and the gathering.

Very Rev. Dr. M.P. George Cor Episcopa and Ecumenical Relations Secretary Fr. Jeo Joseph, and Fr. David Crasta gave leadership.

Farewell to the Deacons at OTS

His Holiness Baselios Marthoma Mathews III, Catholicos of the East, said that to suffer for Christ and to live for the Church is a divine commission. He was delivering the benedictory address at the farewell ceremony for the final year students of the Orthodox Theological Seminary, Kottayam.

The new generation, he said, is increasingly losing its sense of self and sense of community, leading to various conflicts. Conflicts and crises can be mitigated when there is a clear identification of the community and an awareness and understanding of one's own thought processes. His Holiness emphasized that positive self-evaluation is essential in ecclesial ministry.

Vice President H.G. Dr. Mathews Mar Thimothios, H.G. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Barnabas and Vaidika Trustee Fr. Dr. Thomas Varghese Amayil; Principal, Fr. Dr. John Thomas, Fr. Dr. Nainan K. George, Fr. Dr. Jacob Mathew, Fr. Dr. Shaji P. John, Fr. Dr. Varghese P. Varghese, John

Abe Andrews, Fr. Iyob OIC, and Rev. Jaydas Mithran also spoke at the farewell function.

H.H. Bava Thirumeni gave away certificates to those who passed various courses in Prathyasa Pastoral Counselling and Sruti Liturgical Music.

Adon C. Mathew (Niranam), the best preacher of 2025 and Gregory K. Jones, the best preacher of 2026 (Thumpamon) were given cash awards by His Holiness.

Jones Abe Andrews, Shijo Esho and Tony Titus, who won the first, second and third prizes in the Dr. P. C. Alexander Memorial Endowment elocution competition, were also given cash awards.

Convocation Ceremony of STOTS, Nagpur

The St. Thomas Orthodox Theological Seminary, Nagpur, held its Convocation Ceremony on 4 February 2026. The convocation marked the awarding of diplomas to the Graduates of Sacred Theology (GST) from the 2019–2023, 2020–2024, and 2021–2025 batches, as well as to recipients of the Sathyajyothi Diploma in Orthodox Studies. The ceremony was presided over by His Holiness Baselios Marthoma Mathews III, Catholicos of the East and Malankara Metropolitan, and President of the Seminary. The convocation message was delivered by Rev. Asir Ebenezer, General Secretary of the National Council of Churches in India (NCCI). Vice President H. G. Alexios Mar Eusebius, Principal Rev. Fr. Dr. Jossi Jacob and the Registrar Rev. Fr. Baiju Thomas led the proceedings. The occasion stood as a solemn affirmation of theological scholarship, spiritual formation, and a deep commitment to the life and mission of the Church.

Malankara Church's Marriage Assistance distributed

Kottayam: Mutual love and care should be the criteria for marriage, said His Holiness Baselios Marthoma Mathews III, Catholicos of the East, during the inauguration of the distribution of financial assistance to needy young women of all religions under the Church's Marriage Assistance Scheme. In the second phase of this Scheme, assistance was handed over to 40 families facing financial crisis. An amount of Rs. 50 lakh has been earmarked for the project. The function was presided over by His Grace Yohannan Mar Polycarpos, President of the Malankara Sabha Marriage Assistance Scheme. Rony Varghese Abraham, Lay Trustee and Association Secretary, Adv. Biju Ommen, Mr. A.K. Joseph, Mr. P. M. Thomas, Mr. Mathew P G and Mr. Kurian Abraham spoke on the occasion.

Silver Jubilee Inaugural Celebration of Prerana Special School, Kalmeshwar, Nagpur

Prerana Special School marked a significant milestone with the grand inauguration of its Silver Jubilee celebrations on 4th February 2026. The auspicious event was blessed and formally inaugurated by His Holiness Moran Mar Baselios Mathews III, Catholicos of the East and the Malankara Metropolitan who is

also the Patron of The Prerana Multipurpose Society.

In his inaugural address, His Holiness the Catholicos, described this noble mission as a divine providence to all those associated with it, calling on them to respond faithfully to this sacred responsibility.

The ceremony was presided over by H.G. Alexios Mar Eusebius - the Co-Patron of the Society, who in his presidential address led the gathering through the historical journey of the formation of the society, highlighting its origin and growth in serving this noble cause.

The event was further graced by the esteemed presence of Bishops Geevarghese Mar Coorilos, Yuhanon Mar Demetrios, Yakob Mar Elias, and Geevarghese Mar Yulios, who added dignity and solemnity to the occasion.

The gathering commenced with a warm welcome address by Fr. Dr. Jossi Jacob, President of the Society and Principal of STOTS, Nagpur. A special highlight of the program was the felicitation of Fr. Dr. Bijesh Philip, the founder Secretary and Mrs. Seenu Bijesh, the founder Principal of Prerana Special School, by Bava Thirumeni in recognition of their dedicated service and visionary leadership.

The program was made vibrant and memorable through energetic cultural performances by the students of Prerana Special School, reflecting their talents and joyful spirit. Mrs. Soumya Yohannan, Principal of Prerana Special School enlightened the gathering with her warm words. The celebration concluded with a heartfelt vote of thanks by Fr. B. M. Thomas - Secretary of Prerana Society.

BRIDEGROOM WANTED

Orthodox Christian parents from Kottayam Diocese, now settled in the U.S., invite proposals from parents of God-fearing, well-educated, and professionally settled Orthodox Christian boys for their daughter, born and brought up in the U.A.E., currently pursuing her Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) in the U.S. She is 5'3 and currently 22 years old, kind-hearted and family-oriented. We prefer proposals from men working or studying in the U.S., Canada, or and preferably Gulf countries willing to move to the U.S. The marriage would be conducted sometime after July of 2027.

Contact -

marriage.proposals2003@gmail.com

Consecration of Holy Myron at Devalokam Catholicate Aramana on March 27, 2026, with HH the Catholicos as Chief Celebrant